

108
Greatest Of All Times



Globally selected
Personalities



Simón Bolívar
revolutionary leader,
born July 24, 1783

“To practice
justice is to
practice
liberty.”

Dobson's Improbable Quote of the Day

24 Jul 1783 <::><::><::> 17 Dec 1830

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24 Jul 1783



17 Dec 1830

The Liberator of America

Simón Bolívar



Posthumous portrait, 1922

1st [President of Colombia](#)

In office

16 February 1819 – 27 April 1830

Preceded by [Estanislao Vergara y Sanz de Santamaría](#)

Succeeded by [Domingo Caycedo](#)

[President of Peru](#)^[a]

In office

10 February 1824 – 27 January 1827

Preceded by [José Bernardo de Tagle](#)

Succeeded by [José de La Mar](#)

1st [President of Bolivia](#)^[a]

In office

6 August 1825 – 29 December 1825

Preceded by *Office established*

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Succeeded by | Antonio José de Sucre |
| Personal details | |
| Born | 24 July 1783 Caracas , Captaincy General of Venezuela , Spanish Empire |
| Died | 17 December 1830 (aged 47) Santa Marta , Gran Colombia (now Colombia) |
| Resting place | National Pantheon of Venezuela |
| Nationality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spanish (until 1810) Venezuelan (1813–1819) Colombian (from 1819) |
| Spouse | María Teresa Rodríguez del Toro y Alaysa (m. 1802; died 1803) |
| Domestic partner | Manuela Sáenz |
| Signature |  |



Spanish viceroyalties and Portuguese territories in the Americas, 1780

24 Jul 1783

Simon Bolivar Day

<https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/simon-bolivar-day/>

On July 24, 1783, Simon Bolivar was born in Caracas, Venezuela.
Today, the day is celebrated as Simon Bolivar Day throughout
Latin America.



On July 24, 1783, Simon Bolivar was born in Caracas, in what is now Venezuela. Bolivar became the most powerful leader in South America, nicknamed "El Libertador" (the liberator) for helping nations become independent from Spain. Today, July 24 is celebrated as Simon Bolivar Day throughout Latin America. Bolivar was inspired by the American Revolutionary War. He admired George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, and even sent his nephew to the University of Virginia. However, unlike the "Founding Fathers," Bolivar rejected slavery and called for its abolition in the Americas. Bolivar hoped to unite all South American countries into one nation. He did not succeed in this plan. Instead, his leadership helped establish what are now the nations of Colombia, Panama, Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Venezuela. Both Bolivia and Venezuela (officially, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) are named after Bolivar, as are the currencies of both nations (the Bolivian *boliviano* and the Venezuelan *bolivar*).

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International UNESCO/ Simón Bolívar Prize

<https://www.unesco.org/en/prizes/simon-bolivar>



Created in 1978, the purpose of the prize is to reward an activity of outstanding merit in accordance with the ideals of Simón Bolívar (1783-1830). He was one of the most prominent political figures in the emancipation of South America from the Spanish empire for his leading role in the independence of Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela; and for his contribution to the founding processes of the present-day republics of Bolivia and Panama.

Bolívar called for the freedom of slaves and the distribution of land to the indigenous people, and he proposed the Latin American Union. As a symbol of South American independence, he is referred to as the "**Liberator**", and his progressive ideas and emancipatory actions have inevitably made him the "**Great Man of America**".

The prize is intended to reward an activity of outstanding merit which has contributed to the freedom, independence and dignity of peoples and to the strengthening of a new international economic, social and cultural order. Such activity may take the form of intellectual or artistic creation, a social achievement or the mobilization of public opinion.

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Spanish Revolutions

Simon Bolívar

<https://www.historytoday.com/archive/simon-bolivar-and-spanish-revolutions>

Role of Simon Bolivar played in the history of Latin America's independence from Spain.

Simon Bolivar lived a short but comprehensive life. History records his extraordinary versatility. He was a revolutionary who freed six countries, an intellectual who argued the problems of national liberation, a general who fought a war of unremitting violence. He inspired extremes of devotion and detestation. Many Spanish Americans wanted him to be their dictator, their king; but some denounced him as a traitor, and others tried to assassinate him. Subsequent generations completed the apotheosis, and continued the controversy. He has a country, a city, and a currency named after him; he is honoured throughout the Americas in hundreds of statues and streets; his life is the subject of endless writings. To liberal historians he was a fighter against tyranny. Marxists interpret him as the leader of a bourgeois revolution. Modern revolutionaries see him as a reformist who secured political change but left the colonial heritage of his continent virtually intact. There are others who question the very importance of his career and reject the cult of the hero. For them the meaning of liberation is to be found in the study of economic structures, social groups, and the international conjuncture, not in heroic deeds or the lives of liberators. Yet the history of Spanish American independence is incomprehensible without Bolivar. So universal was his career that he intervened at every level of the revolution, in most of its phases, and in many parts of the continent. He was moreover an exceptionally complex man, this liberator who scorned liberalism, soldier who disparaged militarism, republican who admired monarchy. To study Bolivar is to study a rare and original character,

whose mind and will were no less factors in historical change than were the economic and social structures of the time.

Bolivar was born, on July 24th, 1783, to wealth and privilege, the son of an old creole (Spanish American) family of Venezuela, owners of plantations, mines, houses in Caracas, and numerous slaves. It was the colonial élite for whom he spoke when he denounced the tyranny of Spain, the servitude of Spanish Americans, their role as primary producers and consumers of Spanish goods. 'Do you know what our future was?' he asked in the *Jamaica Letter*. 'We were mere consumers, confined to the cultivation of indigo, grain, coffee, sugar, cacao and cotton raising cattle on the empty plains; hunting wild game in the wilderness; mining in the earth to produce gold for the insatiable greed of Spain'. But there was wealth for some, and it could be measured by the sequestrations suffered by the creole insurgents after 1810. Bolivar's losses amounted to 80,000 pesos; the largest single confiscation made by the royalists. His total wealth probably amounted to at least 200,000 pesos, though at the end of his life he had little more than the unrealised assets of the Aroa copper mines.

Bolivar stood apart from his class in ideas, values and vision. Who else would be found in the midst of a campaign swinging in a hammock, reading the French philosophers? His liberal education, wide reading, and travels in Europe had broadened his horizons and opened his mind to the political thinkers of France and Britain. He read deeply in the works of Hobbes and Spinoza, Holbach and Hume; and the thought of Montesquieu and Rousseau left its imprint firmly on him and gave him a life-long devotion to reason, freedom and progress. But he was not a slave of the Enlightenment. British political virtues also attracted him. In his *Angostura Address* (1819) he recommended the British constitution as 'the worthiest to serve as a model for those who desire to enjoy the rights of man and all political happiness compatible with our fragile nature'. But he also affirmed his conviction that American constitutions must conform to American traditions, beliefs and conditions.

His basic aim was liberty, which he described as 'the only object worth the sacrifice of man's life'. For Bolivar liberty did not simply mean freedom from the absolutist state of the eighteenth century, as it did for the Enlightenment, but freedom from a colonial power, to be followed by true independence under a liberal constitution. And with liberty he wanted equality – that is, legal equality – for all men, whatever their class, creed or colour. In principle he was a democrat and he believed that governments should be responsible to the people. 'Only the majority is sovereign', he wrote; 'he who takes the place of the people is a tyrant and his power is usurpation'. But Bolivar was not so idealistic as to imagine that South America was ready for pure democracy, or that the law could annul the inequalities imposed by nature and society. He spent his whole political life developing and modifying his principles, seeking the elusive mean between democracy and authority. In Bolivar the realist and idealist dwelt in uneasy rivalry.

Bolivar was a talented soldier, though his talents differed from those of his more professional contemporaries, Napoleon and Wellington. This was one of the cruellest

of colonial wars, and Bolivar the most ruthless of all the liberators. In his view the enemy was fighting an undeclared war of extermination, killing prisoners whose only crime was that they fought for freedom. He believed that the patriots were at a disadvantage and could no longer wage a civilised war against the Spaniards. After the collapse of the First Republic, he resolved upon a new policy – war to the death. On June 15th, 1813, at Trujillo, he issued his celebrated decree: 'Spaniards and Canarians, depend upon it, you will die even if you are simply neutral, unless you actively espouse the liberation of America. Americans, you will be spared, even when you are guilty'. The exception was significant. This was a civil war, in which Americans predominated on both sides. And Bolivar could not bring himself to wage war to the death against his own people, even though they might be royalists. The Trujillo decree ruthlessly distinguished between Spaniards and Americans; it sought to cut through categories like royalism and republicanism and to make this a war between nations, between Spain and America.

As a soldier Bolivar displayed not only great implacability but also immense powers of endurance; he was there at the beginning of the war of independence, and fifteen years later, in 1824, when the last Spanish viceroy surrendered, he was still in command. His aide and chronicler, General Daniel F. O'Leary, was struck by the contrast between his slight physique and his great stamina: 'After a day's march, enough to exhaust the most robust man, I have seen him work five or six hours, or dance as long'. But Bolivar was distinguished above all by the magic of his leadership. This was never truer than in 1817, a dark year for the revolution. The First Republic had capitulated in 1812; the Second had been destroyed by royalist caudillos; a Spanish expedition under General Pablo Morillo, a veteran of the Peninsular War, completed the triumph of the counter-revolution. After two years exile it was with the greatest difficulty that Bolivar managed to regain a foothold on the mainland. He led his men south into Guayana in a new and visionary strategy, to base the revolution deep in the hinterland, among the great plains of the Orinoco, a barrier against defeat, a springboard for attack, and a source of wealth in their reserves of livestock.

But now Bolivar had to fight against the enemy within as well as the royalists without. The wars of independence in northern South America were fought with two armies, regular forces and local guerrillas, movements which were part allies, part rivals. A soldier had to be a politician, and Bolivar was no exception: he sought power as well as freedom, he wanted to rule as well as to liberate. He had to fight to impose unity on the revolution and to broaden its social base, two aims which from our vantage point we can see were to become permanent challenges to Latin American leaders. The caudillos, or regional chieftains, of the revolution, Santiago Marino, Francisco Bermudez and Manuel Piar, were reluctant to recognise the command of Bolivar, whose grandiose plans had collapsed while they kept resistance alive in the east. General Piar posed the greatest threat, partly because of his military ability, and partly because, a pardo (mulatto) himself, he sought to mobilise the coloured population and to make it his power base. He was hunted down, brought to trial and shot, 'for proclaiming the odious principles of race war, for inciting civil war, and for encouraging anarchy'. Bolivar calculated carefully in executing Piar. As O'Leary observed, 'General Marino certainly deserved the same treatment as Piar, but he was less dangerous, and one example was sufficient'. The danger lay in black power.

The republic could no longer ignore race problems or suppress popular forces. Bolivar himself, the most daring and idealistic of the creoles, had long seen the need to fuse the creole, pardo and slave rebellions into one great movement. He considered himself free of race prejudice and fought for liberty and equality. The revolution would correct the imbalance imposed by nature and colonialism: previously 'the whites, by virtue of talent, merit and fortune, monopolised everything. The pardos, degraded to the most humiliating condition, had nothing. But the revolution has granted them every privilege, every right, every advantage'. So Bolivar denounced Piar for inciting race war at a time when equality was already being granted to the coloured people. From 1815-16 growing numbers of pardos were incorporated into the army of liberation: they were needed to fill the gaps in the patriot ranks left by creole casualties and desertions, and they themselves were imbued with greater expectations from wartime social mobility. After this the traditional structure of the republican army was transformed, and while the creoles retained military and political control, the pardos (who in Venezuela were the mass of the population) had greater opportunities for advance to higher ranks and offices. To this extent Bolivar was right: the people had more to gain from the republican cause. But what had the slaves to gain?

Bolivar was an abolitionist. He regarded it as 'madness that a revolution for liberty should try to maintain slavery', and in one of his frankest speeches he called upon the Congress of Angostura in 1819 to remove from Venezuela 'the dark mantle of barbarous and profane slavery'. But Bolivar was also a military leader who needed recruits, and during the war he tied emancipation to conscription, offering slaves manumission in return for military service. The response was negative. The Venezuelan aristocracy did not embrace the republican cause in order to divest themselves of property, while the slaves were not interested in fighting the creole's war. Nevertheless, the policy of Bolivar helped to neutralise the slaves; they no longer actively fought the republic, as they had done in 1812-14, and they gradually disappeared from the war as an autonomous movement. Meanwhile, Bolivar wanted the support not only of the pardos and slaves but also of a third group, the *llaneros*, the plainsmen of south-west Venezuela.

There, in the Apure valley, José Antonio Paez, the most powerful of all the caudillos, had his own base and his own army. Paez was the complete antithesis of Bolivar; uneducated, illiterate, yet possessed of natural gifts of leadership, he had risen through the ranks to become absolute lord of the plains and a future contender for power. His *llanero* followers were ferocious horsemen, primitive and predatory, who responded to no ideology, only to plunder and the promise of land. Paez fashioned them into a savage yet disciplined lancer force, and accepting that only Bolivar could integrate the disparate regional forces into one movement, he recognised the sovereignty of Bolivar and in February 1818 contributed a thousand cavalry to a joint force of over four thousand. By now, therefore, Bolivar had achieved unity of command amidst diversity of forces. There was one further requirement, foreign aid.

In 1817 the Venezuelan representative in London, Luis Lopez Mendez, was asked by Bolivar to recruit a British expeditionary force to join the patriot army. Over 6,000

volunteers left British ports for South America during the next two years, together with ships, sailors and great quantities of arms and munitions. These men formed the nucleus of the British Legion and were regarded by Bolivar as vital reinforcements, while the rifles, artillery and other military equipment, provided on credit by British merchants, were no less urgent. Bolivar was later to describe these volunteers as 'the saviours' of his country, and with equal generosity to say that the true Liberator had been Lopez Mendez, 7 because without the arms and men sent from England the campaign of 1819 could not have been won. The truth is that without the strategic sense of Bolivar the campaign would not have been conceived.

He decided to take the revolution westwards and to liberate New Granada. In Venezuela the republic had reached an impasse and found it impossible to crush the royalists. To switch the theatre of war from one country to another would have a dazzling effect and constitute in itself a rare moral victory. Bolivar could lure Morillo from Venezuela and, if the operation were successful, return to his homeland from a position of strength and with greater striking power. So he invaded New Granada. In an agonising march, when a quarter of his army and many of the British volunteers perished, he led his forces during the rainy season through, the vast waterlogged plains of Casanare, across the Andes at great altitude, and into the heart of enemy territory, where he defeated the astonished Spaniards at the battle of Boyaca.

Other victories followed, first in Venezuela itself, where at the Battle of Carabobo (1821) he brought all the caudillo forces together into one grand army and where the British Legion won his special praise. He then moved south to take the revolution to Ecuador and Peru, and to link up with the movement emanating from the southern cone. By now he had assembled a truly American army drawn from many parts of the continent, its incomparable cavalry led by the llaneros of Venezuela, its infantry recruited in Colombia and Peru and reinforced still by the depleted British units. The leadership of Bolivar and the planning of his favourite commander, General Sucre, met in happy collaboration for their last decisive campaign high in the Peruvian sierra. 'They destroyed the remnants of Spanish power first at Ayacucho (1824), and finally in Upper Peru. Together Bolivar and Sucre entered Potosi, where they climbed the legendary silver mountain and drank to the American revolution.

Bolivar gave his name to the new state of Bolivia and he drafted its constitution. In the later years of his life he was haunted by the spectre of anarchy in America. The failure of the First Republic he attributed to federalism and weak government. The collapse of the Second Republic he blamed on disunity and inexperience. He then worked with the caudillos and their lawless followers to revive the revolution. After 1819 he denounced lawyers, legislators and liberals. In 1826 he identified 'two monstrous enemies' in the speech presenting his draft constitution to the Bolivian Congress. 'Tyranny and anarchy constitute an immense sea of oppression encircling a tiny island of freedom.' Spanish Americans, he lamented, were "seduced by freedom", each person wanting absolute power for himself and refusing any subordination. This led to civilian factions, military risings, and provincial rebellions. It was in this frame of mind that he drafted the Bolivian constitution.

His lifelong search for a political mean now veered towards strong government. The president, in this constitution, was appointed by the legislature for life and had the right to appoint his successor; this Bolivar regarded as 'the most sublime inspiration of republican ideas', the president being 'the sun which, fixed in its orbit, imparts life to the universe'. Thus 'elections would be avoided, which are the greatest scourge of republics and produce only anarchy'. The rest of the constitution was not devoid of liberal details. It provided for civil rights – liberty, equality, security and property – and for a strong, independent judicial power. It abolished social privileges, and it declared the slaves free. Some observers were genuinely impressed. The British consul in Lima believed that it was 'founded apparently on the basis of the British constitution', allowing 'useful liberty' but 'obviating any mischievous excess of popular power'. But this constitution was branded by its executive power, by the life president with right to choose his successor. It was this which outraged many Americans, conservatives as well as liberals. The political career of Bolivar himself, moreover, took a similar path in Colombia, as he moved from president to dictator. This was his tragedy. In spite of his preference for a political over a military solution, in spite of his long search for constitutional forms, he fell back in the end on personal authority, ruling through a dictatorship and co-opting the caudillos into a system which appealed to their own instincts on government. In 1828-30 Bolivar ruled alone in Colombia, the only stable thing in a world in turmoil. Yet he never deserted his original ideals of liberty and equality. Rather he put strong government at the service of reform a synthesis incomprehensible to the liberals of his time but more understood in our own day, when powerful presidential government and one-party states are regarded as appropriate, or at least inevitable, constitutional forms for new and developing nations.

Bolivar entered world history as one of the first modern leaders of a national liberation movement. Yet he himself was not aggressively nationalist, either towards neighbouring American countries or towards outside powers. His ambition was to unite rather than divide the Spanish American peoples. He created the great state of Colombia, comprising Venezuela, New Granada and Ecuador. He then sought to unite this with Peru and Bolivia in a Federation of the Andes. And he dreamed of the 'great day of America' when its peoples would come together in a league of nations. These ideas, of course, operated at different levels of planning and possibility. His ideal of a greater Colombia, which existed for about a decade, was not a denial of national identity but an affirmation of it. He was trying to establish the appropriate size of a viable nation, seeking unity as a means to national strength and economic sufficiency. Unity would ensure peace and well-being as opposed to the anarchy of local caudillo rule, what he called 'Mini governments'. And unity would earn greater respect from other nations, from Britain and the United States. In Bolivar's view foreign indifference towards Latin American independence was a consequence of the proliferation of tiny sovereignties, squabbling among themselves.

It was a losing battle. Bolivar came to realise that the creation of a greater Colombia had been premature, and as the heroic age of Americanism passed, he became one of the many victims of national awareness and national rivalries, denounced as a traitor in Venezuela and a foreigner in New Granada. He could no longer ignore the forces of separatism; the immense distances, the scanty population, the poor record of the central government, the survival of powerful local caudillos, such as Paez in

Venezuela, who could express their ambition on a regional scale if not at the centre, all these were factors of division and dissension. And these were his thoughts when he left Peru for Colombia in September 1826, to come to the rescue of his own creation: 'I have too many problems in my native land, which I have long neglected for other countries in America. I intend to do all the good I can for Venezuela without attempting anything further'. But it was too late and Venezuela was already seceding from the union.

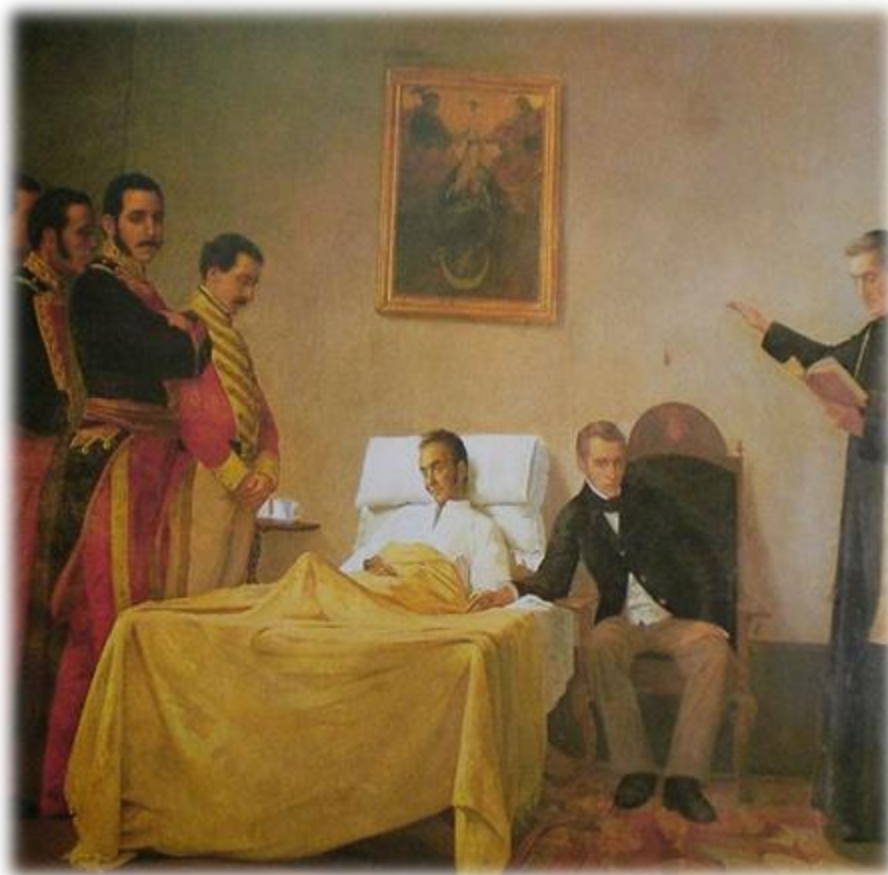
While Bolivar abandoned his Pan Americanism and reverted to a more nationalist position, there was little sign in his thought of economic nationalism or of that resentment against foreign penetration which later generations felt. While he rejected the Spanish colonial monopoly, he welcomed foreigners who subscribed to open trade and who brought much needed manufactured goods and entrepreneurial skills. He was always friendly towards Britain. 'Politically', he wrote, 'alliance with Great Britain would be a greater victory than Ayacucho, and if we procure it you may be certain that our future happiness is assured. The advantages that will result for Colombia if we ally ourselves with that mistress of the universe are incalculable'. The policy was one of self-interest rather than dependence; it expressed the anxiety of a young and weak state to acquire a protector – and a liberal protector – against the power of Spain and the Holy Alliance. Britain provided one of Bolivar's basic requirements, namely diplomatic, and in the ultimate analysis naval, protection against counter-revolution from Europe. 'America will never forget', he said, 'that Mr. Canning caused her rights to be respected'.

The Liberator was also a reformer, and as he sought to establish the political framework of the revolution, so he struggled to broaden its social base. He stood for equality as well as liberty, and he insisted on ending racial discrimination, at least before the law. The slave trade was abolished in Venezuela in 1811, but slavery endured. Bolivar set an example. He liberated his own slaves, first on condition of military service in 1814, when about fifteen accepted, and then unconditionally in 1821 after the liberation of Venezuela, when over a hundred profited. And he repeatedly pressed congress to decree abolition. He argued that the creole rulers and property-owners must accept the implications of independence, that the example of freedom was 'insistent and compelling', and that the republicans 'must triumph by the road of revolution and no other'. The post-war Congress of Cucuta passed a complex law of manumission, but it lacked teeth and also the funds to pay compensation. All over Spanish America the chronology of abolition tended to be determined not by principles but by the role of slavery in any given economy. Where slavery was significant or constituted an important property right, so it survived (in Venezuela to 1854), and Bolivar fought a lone battle.

Land and labour remained under the control of the great proprietors. Bolivar was aware of the agrarian structure, and he wanted to distribute land confiscated from the royalists to the republican soldiers, whom he regarded as the people in arms. On October 10th, 1817, he issued the 'law on the distribution of national property among the soldiers', the first of a number of such decrees. The scheme was confined to those

who fought in the hardest years, 1816-19, and the intention, as Bolivar put it, was 'to make of each soldier a property-owning citizen'. Strictly speaking it was not a bonus but a basic payment to men who had not received a regular wage; and it was graded according to rank. But Bolivar's plans were frustrated by the combined action of legislators and officers. Congress decreed that the soldiers be paid not in actual land but in *bonos*, vouchers entitling the holder to receive national land at a vague post-war date. Ignorant and impoverished soldiers were easy prey: the *bonos* were bought up by officers and civilian speculators at ridiculous prices, and in this way most of the soldiers, including the *llaneros*, were defrauded of their right to land. The injustice outraged the Liberator and he protested to congress, but in vain. Yet this was not his last word on agrarian problems.

Bolivar also sought to give land to the Peruvian Indians in individual ownership. 'The poor Indians', he declared, 'are truly in a state of lamentable depression. I intend to help them all I can, first as a matter of humanity, second because it is their right'. But good intentions were not enough. In breaking up the Indian communities and redistributing their lands, liberal reforms of this kind exposed the Indians to pressure from estate owners, who took their land and demanded their labour. Bolivar decreed a further measure of land reform, in Bolivia in 1825; the aim was to distribute state land, preferably among 'the natives and those who have offered and suffered much in the cause of independence'. But the reform was sabotaged by the Bolivian ruling class, who regarded a free and landed peasantry as a threat to their dependent labour supply.



Bolívar's death by Venezuelan painter Antonio Herrera Toro

'To understand revolutions and their participants', wrote Bolivar, 'we must observe them at close range and judge them at great distance'. History may judge that the Liberator was to some degree a prisoner of his environment. He could not push the creole elite too far along the path of reform for fear of a backlash, in which independence itself might be jeopardised. Where he differed from his contemporaries was in his awareness of the true limitations of independence, and in his acute perception of the socio-racial tensions of the time 'A great volcano lies at our feet. Who shall restrain the oppressed classes!' Slavery will break its yoke, each racial group will seek mastery'. In 1828, in a mood of deep pessimism, he described the enduring polarisation of Spanish American society between the privileged few and the deprived many:

In Colombia there is an aristocracy of rank, office and wealth, equivalent by its influence, its pretensions and its pressure on the people, to the most despotic aristocracy of titles and birth in Europe. Included in the ranks of this aristocracy are the clergy, professional groups, lawyers, the military and the rich. In spite of all their liberalism, they prefer to regard the lower classes as their perpetual serfs.

Two years later, as anarchy and violence swept over the new states, he declared his bitter disappointment at the achievements of the revolution: 'Independence is the only benefit we have gained, at the cost of everything else'. Convinced that America was ungovernable, and mortally ill from tuberculosis, he left Bogota to make his way to the coast and exile. He died near Santa Marta on December 17th, 1830, in his forty-seventh year, 'his last moments', recorded O'Leary, 'the last embers of an expiring volcano, the dust of the Andes still on his garments'.

[John Lynch is Director of the Institute of Latin American Studies and Professor of Latin American History at the University of London.]

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Memorial

General Simón Bolívar

<https://www.nps.gov/places/000/general-simon-bolivar-memorial.htm>

The monument to Simón Bolívar (1783-1830) commemorates one of South America's great generals who led successful revolutions against Spanish rule. It is located at the entrance to the park at 59th Street and Sixth Avenue.



Inscriptions

Pedestal, front

SIMON BOLIVAR
THE LIBERATOR
BORN JULY 24 1783
CARACAS VENEZUALA
DIED DECEMBER 17 1830
SANTA MARTA COLOMBIA

Pedestal, east

THE REPUBLIC OF VENEZUELA TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA 1958

Pedestal, west

LIBERATED VENEZUELA, COLOMBIA, ECUADOR, PERU, BOLIVIA AND PANAMA

Pedestal, plaque

DE ABRIL DE 1810 20 DE FEBRERO DE 1859
INDEPENDENCIA FEDERACION
REPUBLICA DE VENEZUELA

Pedestal base

Felix W. de Weldon, Sculptor
Luis Malaussena, Architect
Casielles Asociados Engrs
of Caracas, Venezuela

Bolívar's leadership and military skill led to independence for six modern-day South American countries: Panama, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Venezuela, and Bolivia, which was named after him.

The current monument is not the first sculpture of Bolívar installed in Central Park. In 1884, amidst growing economic alliances between the U.S. and South America, the Venezuelan government gifted a monument to Bolívar to the Park. It was placed on [Summit Rock](#), the highest point in the Park near West 83rd Street. Almost immediately the equestrian statue was deemed a poor work of art by the Society of American Architects and the press. In 1897, the Venezuelan government presented a second sculpture of Bolívar, which was also deemed unsuitable. Sometime afterward, the original statue was removed and for approximately 20 years, the pedestal on this highpoint, sometimes called "Bolívar Hill," stood empty.

Undeterred, the Venezuelan government sponsored a worldwide design competition for a third Bolívar statue in 1916. The commission was awarded to American sculptor Sally James Farnham (1869-1943) and her monument was placed on a new pedestal at Summit Rock in 1921. At the time, Farnham's Bolívar was the largest bronze monument sculpted by a woman.

In 1945, Sixth Ave was renamed the "Avenue of the Americas" by New York Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia. He hoped the new name would draw South American businesses and consulates to the area and elevate the status of the avenue. Its entrance to the Park was envisioned as a plaza of South American heroes and the monument to Bolívar was relocated there in 1951. It is one of a trio of equestrian statues honoring Latin America liberators, standing alongside the monuments [José de San Martín](#) and [José Martí](#).



Simon Bolívar Award

<https://www.psychiatry.org/membership/awards-leadership-opportunities/awards/simon-bolivar-award>

The Simon Bolivar Award, established in 1975, honors a prominent advocate for Hispanics and is designed to sensitize APA members to the mental health problems and goals of Hispanics. Funded by Eli Lilly and Company and Pfizer Inc.

Program Benefits

\$500, Plaque, Award lecture

Criteria / Eligibility

Candidates for the award should be of Hispanic descent.

Nomination / Application Details

- Nominations can be submitted at [apply.psychiatry.org](https://www.psychiatry.org/membership/awards-leadership-opportunities/awards/simon-bolivar-award)
- An open call for nominations will be published in APA communications.
- Self-nominations and nominations by a colleague are accepted.
- Nominations must include the following information:
 - A Letter of Recommendation
 - The nominee's current CV and bibliography.

Deadline

August 15

Notification

After the APAF Board of Directors confirms the awardees, typically in November.

Award Presentation

Award presented at the APA Annual Meeting at the Bolivar Lecture.

Contact

APA Foundation

APAF Awards@psych.org



PROFILE

Simon Bolívar

Liberator of South America

Then and Now

<https://www.aa.com.tr/en/life/profile-simon-bolivar-liberator-of-south-america-then-and-now/1539914>

The legendary Simon Bolivar, born this day in July 1783, was the charismatic leader of Latin America's independence movement from Spain.

The legacy of Bolivar, who died in 1830, still echoes across Central and South America.

His name appears in the names of countries, on currency, in numerous place names, and on statues across the world.

Ecuador, Bolivia and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela were named after Bolivar and are currently run by three bolivarianos – Rafael Correa, Evo Morales, and Nicolas Maduro, respectively.

His relentless fight against the European conquistadors and trailblazing ideas that cherished independence and freedom drove the Spanish colonizers from northern South America.

His later years were marked by the collapse of his grand dream of a united South America, yet he is still remembered as "The Liberator" who astonishingly liberated one million square kilometers over the space of 11 years -- specifically, the countries of Colombia, Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Panama.

"In the unity of our nations rests the glorious future of our peoples," he reportedly said, a quote that summarized his dream for a united South

America, similar to the United States of America in the north with George Washington as one of its "founding fathers."

One Latin American diplomat said of him: "Neither Washington nor Bolivar was destined to have children of their own, so that we Americans might call ourselves their children."

Early life

Bolivar was born in Caracas to a wealth family, one of a handful of "creoles" owning large swathes of land.

Both of his parents died while he was still a child: he had no memory of his father, Juan Vicente Bolivar y Ponte, and his mother Maria de la Concepcion Palacios y Blanco died when he was only 9.

Raised by his uncle and aunt, Bolivar received the finest education available in South America from both private tutors and esteemed schools.

His marriage to Maria Teresa del Toro y Alayza in 1802 was short lived, as she got sick and died of yellow fever the very next year.

From 1804 to 1807, he went to Europe to study in Madrid, where he met influential figures, including French leader Napoleon Bonaparte.

Achievements

When he returned to Venezuela in 1807, he saw a popular desire for independence after efforts to ignite the independence torch in 1806 by another patriotic Venezuelan general, Francisco de Miranda, in the form of an invasion of Spanish-controlled territories ended in failure.

It was when Napoleon invaded Spain in 1808 and imprisoned King Ferdinand VII that the independence movement gained undeniable momentum.

On April 19, 1810, the people of Caracas, the territory of Venezuela's capital, declared provisional independence from Spain, which meant nominal allegiance to King Ferdinand but self-rule in Venezuela until the Spanish king returned to the throne.

Bolivar rejected this partial independence and began a confidence-building tour in Europe, starting with Britain.

When he returned, patriots and royalists were still at odds. On July 5, 1811, the First Venezuelan Republic voted for full independence.

In 1812, the independence movement suffered a severe blow when a magnitude 7.7 earthquake devastated the liberated cities of Venezuela, killing nearly 20,000 people.

Spanish priests wasted no time in spreading religious propaganda, convincing a superstitious and naive population that the earthquake was divine retribution and poetic justice to punish the independence movement from Spain.

Royalist Capt. Domingo Monteverde rallied the Spanish and royalist forces and captured important ports and the city of Valencia, causing the first republic to fall and the Spanish to regain control of Venezuela.

This process also led to a falling out between Bolivar and Miranda.

The 'Admirable Campaign'

Bolivar was defeated and went into exile, only to come back in 1812 to modern-day Colombia in a bid to join the independence movement there. He bravely fought the Spanish forces with 200 men he was given, and his reputation as a liberator across the territories grew bigger and bigger.

In 1813, he was strong enough to recapture Venezuela. His bravery in quickly driving his victorious forces to Caracas and establishing the Second Venezuelan Republic is still remembered to this day as the "Admirable Campaign."

However, maintaining independence was not easy at a time when the Spanish colonizers still had military superiority. Defeated by Spanish commander Jose Tomas Boves at the second Battle of La Puerta in 1814, Bolivar was forced to leave Caracas, ending the Second Republic. Bolivar went into exile again.

In 1815, he penned his famous Letter from Jamaica, which chronicled the region's struggles for independence.

When he returned, he saw many patriotic generals fighting each other, neglecting the real enemy. Bolivar made an example of Gen. Manuel Piar by executing him in October 1817, a clear message that brought other generals in line.

In 1817, Bolivar invaded Venezuela again and was elected the nation's president.

Defeating the Spanish forces at the Battle of Boyaca in 1819, he liberated the territory which is modern-day Colombia.

Meanwhile, in Spain, Spanish liberals revolted against King Fernando VII, and Bolivar's Gran Colombia was declared a reality with Bolivar as president.

In 1821, Bolivar marched to Ecuador and liberated it from Spain. The following year he met with Argentine liberator Jose de San Martin, who decided to turn over the entire rebel army to Bolivar. In 1823, the last Spanish forces were defeated in Venezuela. In 1825, he liberated Alta Peru, and Bolivia was founded.

Difficult years

Bolivar faced tough times from 1825 onwards when violent factionalism sprung up all over northern South America. In 1828, he proclaimed himself absolute ruler to resolve the political impasse in liberated regions.

That August, thanks to his lover, Manuela Saenz, he survived one of many assassination attempts.

Until his resignation as president and death in 1830, he dealt with uprisings that broke out all over liberated territories.

He died of tuberculosis on Dec. 17 in Santa Marta, Colombia.

Bolivar's reputation declined throughout Latin America with the emergence of new factions, but as the new countries grew, they acknowledged that his memory and legacy was vital to nurturing a proud sense of nationhood.



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Simón Bolívar Foundation

<https://www.simonbolivarfoundation.org/>

Vision

A future where access to basic health care is a valued human right.

Mission

Improve the health of vulnerable individuals affected by disaster, conflict and poverty, with special attention to children and mothers in and from Venezuela.

The Simón Bolívar Foundation is the 501(c)(3) non-profit, private foundation of CITGO Petroleum Corporation. It serves as a catalyst to transform lives by connecting and networking community members to take community action. Initiatives leverage existing resources and invest in organizations to meet the immediate and long-term health needs of the most vulnerable in and from Venezuela, the United States and other countries. The Foundation supports a wide range of programming and direct support—creating dividends to benefit the wider community for years to come.

Governance

Simón Bolívar Foundation was established in 2006 as the 501(c)(3) non-profit, private foundation of CITGO Petroleum Corporation ("CITGO"), incorporated in the State of

Delaware. The Foundation is also registered in the states of Texas, Louisiana, and Illinois where the CITGO headquarters, refineries and other operations are located.

- Subject to federal, state and local laws in the United States and to audits and controls by authorities such as the Internal Revenue Service (IRS-Tax) and State Attorneys General for the states where the Foundation is registered.
- Subject to the U.S. Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA) and U.S. sanctions issued by OFAC.
- Operates as a separate legal entity from CITGO.
- Subject to CITGO internal audits and external audits by the IRS or other governmental agencies of the U.S. government as well as the states where the Foundation is registered.
- Required to annually report its activities to the IRS.
- Financial statements audited annually by an external auditor.
- Mariela Poleo became president of the Simón Bolívar Foundation in 2020 after a competitive selection process.

To maintain tax-exempt status given by the IRS and legally operate as a U.S. registered 501(c)(3) private foundation, all donations must be for strictly charitable purposes and are subject to special restrictions, including:

a) Prohibition of lobbying and political activity.

b) The Foundation must select its beneficiaries independently, without external interference, and it is prohibited from making donations or transactions for “self-benefit” (self-dealing) or with PDVSA authorities or the arm of the Venezuelan government that controls PDVSA.

c) No family member or organization belonging to CITGO, PDVSA, or the arm of the Venezuelan government that controls PDVSA or National Assembly can receive charitable grants from the Foundation.

In addition, the Foundation has defined eligibility criteria, which include that grant applicants may not be related, in its broadest scope, with officials of any government.



Simón Bolívar
Foundation.

2023
AT A GLANCE

MISSION

Improve the health of vulnerable individuals affected by disaster, conflict and poverty, with special attention to children and mothers in and from Venezuela.




\$7.8 Million
Donation from CTGG


9
Countries


281,722
Estimated Beneficiaries


114
Hospitals


1.1 Million
Meals


360,000
Medicines & Vitamins


15,900
PPE


15
Grants Successfully
Completed and Verified


25
Grants Signed



"Doctors made us feel like people.
They cared about our feelings; they really
wanted our health to improve. We were
not just another number."
—Patient benefited by a grant

Estimated numbers based on Agreements signed in 2023

*As of December 14, 2023

Celebrating Hispanic Heritage

<https://postalmuseum.si.edu/exhibition/celebrating-hispanic-heritage-independence/sim%C3%B3n-bol%C3%ADvar>

After centuries of Spanish rule, many colonies began to seek independence from Spain in the early 19th century. Influenced by the Enlightenment and a desire for self-rule, revolutions began throughout Central and South America. Several key military figures led the colonies to victory. Among them was the South American general known as El Libertador (the Liberator), Simón Bolívar.



Issued on July 24, 1958 as part of the Champions of Liberty series.



Issued on July 24, 1958 as part of the Champions of Liberty series.



The Battle of Taguanes



Batalla de Carabobo by Martin Tovar y Tovar



Antonio Jose Piez at the battle of Las Queseras del Medio



Meeting between Bolivar and San Martin

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Spanish - American Wars

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spanish_American_wars_of_independence

Spanish American wars of independence

Part of the [Atlantic Revolutions](#) and the [Napoleonic Wars](#)









From left to right, top to bottom: the [Congress of Chilpancingo](#) (1813), the [Congress of Cúcuta](#) (1821), the [Crossing of the Andes](#) (1817), the extent of the Spanish Empire on the eve of the conflict in 1810, according to the [Cortes de Cádiz](#)

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Date | 25 September 1808 – 29 September 1833 |
| Location | Spanish Empire |
| Result | Patriot victory |
| Territorial changes | Disintegration of Spanish America show |
| List | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diplomatic recognition in 1821 (Portugal), 1822 (US), and 1825 (UK). • Spain retained the islands of Cuba and Puerto Rico until the Spanish–American War of 1898. • Banda Oriental and Spanish Texas become part of the United Kingdom of Portugal, Brazil and the Algarves and First Mexican Empire respectively. |


Participants

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patriots •  United Kingdom (1815–1819) •  United States (1810–1819) • Haiti • Indigenous allies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Royalists •  Spain •  Russian Empire • Indigenous allies |
|---|---|

Units involved

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •  Army of the Andes •  Armed forces of Chile •  Armed forces of Gran Colombia •  Armed forces of Mexico •  Armed forces of Peru •  Orientals forces •  Republican Army of the North | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •  Spanish Army •  Spanish Navy |
|---|--|

Strength

| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 130,000 Patriots • 6,500 British Legions | Unknown |
|---|---|
| Casualties and losses | |
| Unknown | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30,000 European soldiers lost • 35,000 Indigenous royalists killed^[a] |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1,000,000 total dead • 600,000 in New Spain • 400,000 in New Granada | |
|  Napoleonic Spain (1808-1813) preserved the integrity of the Spanish Empire. | |

The **Spanish American wars of independence** ([Spanish](#): *Guerras de independencia hispanoamericanas*) took place across the [Spanish Empire](#) in the early 19th century. The struggles in both hemispheres began shortly after the outbreak of the [Peninsular War](#), forming part of the broader context of the [Napoleonic Wars](#). The conflict unfolded between the royalists, who were defeated and favored a unitary monarchy, and the patriots, who won and promoted either plural monarchies or republics, separated from [Spain](#) and from each other. These struggles ultimately led to the independence and secession of continental [Spanish America](#) from metropolitan rule, which, beyond this conflict, resulted in a process of [Balkanization](#) in [Latin America](#). Thus, the strict period of military campaigns ranges from the Battle of Chacaltaya (1809) in present-day [Bolivia](#), to the [Battle of Tampico \(1829\)](#) in [Mexico](#).

In 1808, [Napoleon Bonaparte](#), as part of his [Continental Blockade](#) strategy against the [British Empire](#), forced the [Spanish royal family](#) to [abdicate](#) the throne, imposed the [Bayonne Statute](#), and installed his brother, [Joseph Bonaparte](#), as King of Spain. In the [18th century](#), the [Habsburg dynasty](#) was replaced by the [Bourbons](#), and the Spanish Empire declined to a second-rate global power following the [War of the Spanish Succession](#). Similarly, the replacement of the Bourbons with the [Bonaparte dynasty](#) aimed to preserve the empire's integrity. However, [Napoleonic Spain](#) (1808-1813) was ultimately defeated in the [Peninsular War](#). The rejection of this new dynasty created a power vacuum and led to the emergence of [liberalism](#) and a desire for liberties throughout the [Spanish Empire](#). At first, some major cities or capitals formed local Juntas on the basis of laws from the Hispanic tradition. The violent conflicts started in 1809, with short-lived [juntas](#) established to govern in [Chuquisaca](#), [La Paz](#) and [Quito](#) opposing the government of the [Supreme Central Junta of Seville](#). At the beginning of 1810, [new juntas](#) appeared across Spanish America when the Central Junta fell to the French invasion. Although various regions objected to many crown policies, "there was little interest in outright independence; indeed there was widespread support for the Spanish Central Junta formed to lead the resistance against the French". While some Spanish Americans believed that independence was necessary, most who initially supported the creation of the new governments saw them as a means to preserve the region's autonomy from the French. Although there had been research on the idea of a separate Spanish American ("creole") identity

separate from that of [Iberia](#), political independence was not initially the aim of most Spanish Americans, nor was it necessarily inevitable.

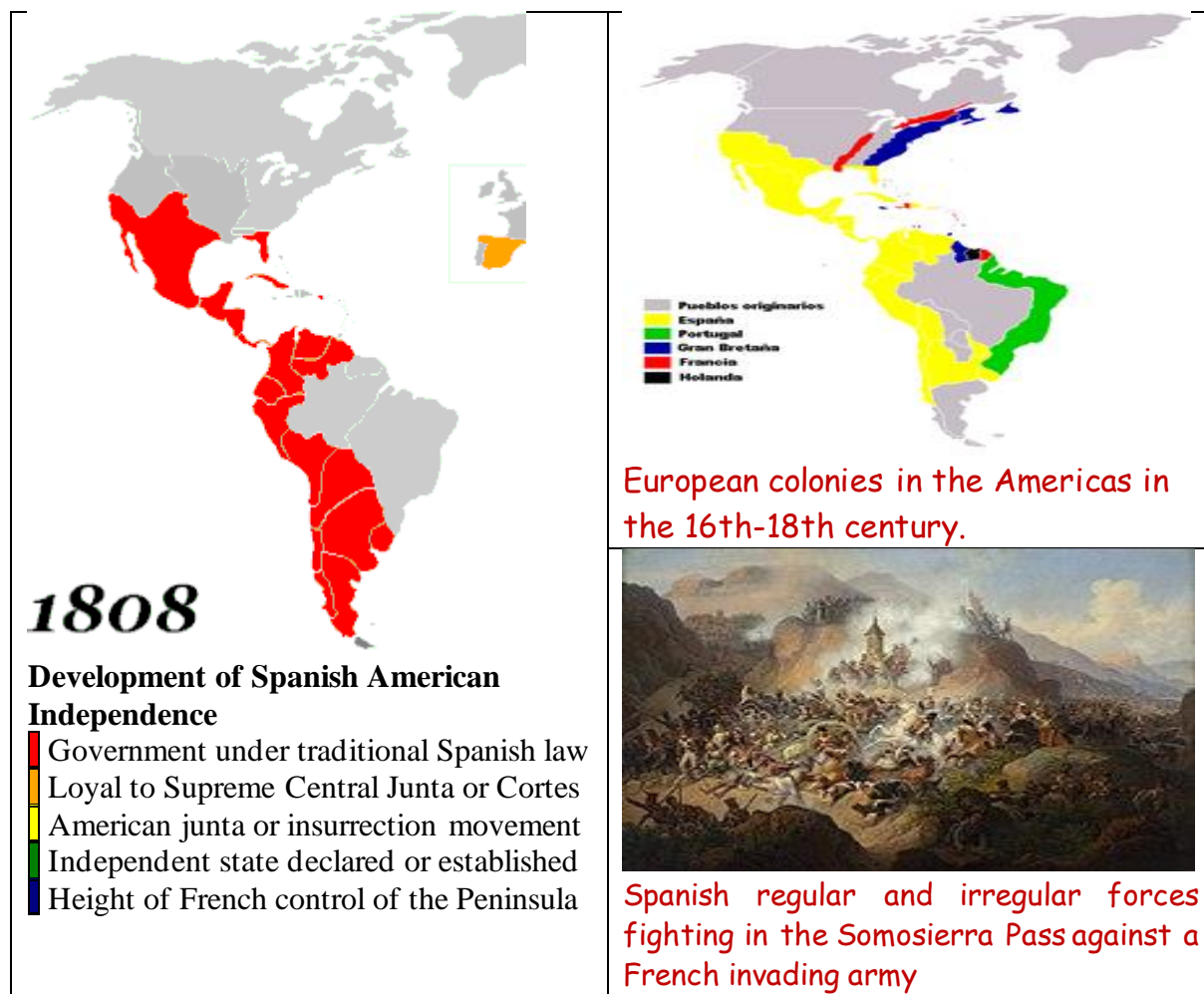
At the end of 1810, [Ferdinand VII of Spain](#), captive, was recognized by the [Cortes of Cádiz](#) and by the governing juntas in the Americas as a king subordinate to [popular sovereignty](#). The governing juntas across America wanted to reinstate [Ferdinand VII](#) as king and refused to accept the authority of the Council of Regency that was established with the dissolution of the Supreme and Central Governmental Junta of Spain and the Indies. In agreement on this, a military conflict arose between Royalists and Patriots over the unity or independence of the empire. These juntas gained their own levels of independence and autonomy from Spain through declarations in 1808-1812. However, [Ferdinand VII](#) reimposed [absolute monarchy](#) in 1814 with a [coup d'état](#), following the defeat of Napoleon and the [Treaty of Valençay](#). He was able to defeat and repress the peninsular liberals, and abolished the liberal [Constitution of Cadiz](#), although he could not defeat the revolutionaries in Spanish America, who resisted and formed their own national congresses. The Spanish navy had collapsed in the war against Napoleon, so therefore, in practice, it did not support the expeditionary forces who arrived in small groups. In 1820 the Spanish army, led by [Rafael Riego](#), revolted against absolutism, restored the so-called [Trienio Liberal](#), and ended the threat of invasion against the [Río de la Plata](#), resulting in royalist collapse in Americas. Over the course of the next decade, the Patriots' armies won major victories and obtained independence in their respective countries. Spain did not change the position against separatism, but the political instability in Spain, without a navy, army or treasury, convinced many Spanish Americans of the need to formally establish independence from the [metropole](#). In Spain, a [French army of the Holy Alliance](#) invaded and supported the absolutists, restored Ferdinand VII, and occupied Spain until 1828.

These conflicts were fought both as [irregular warfare](#) and [conventional warfare](#). Some historians claim that the wars began as localized civil wars, that later spread and expanded as secessionist wars to promote general independence from Spanish rule. This independence led to the development of new national boundaries based on the [colonial provinces](#), which would form the future independent countries that constituted contemporary Latin America during the early 19th century. Cuba and Puerto Rico remained under [Spanish rule](#) until the 1898 [Spanish–American War](#).

The conflict resulted in the dissolution of the Spanish monarchy and the creation of new states. The independence of Spanish America did not constitute an anticolonial movement. The new republics immediately abandoned the formal system of the [Inquisition](#) and noble titles. In most of these new countries, [slavery](#) was not abolished, and racial classification and hierarchy were imposed. Total abolition did not come until the 1850s in most of the Latin American republics. A [caste system](#), influenced by the [scientific racism](#) of the [European Enlightenment](#), was maintained until the 20th century. The [Criollos](#) of European descent born in the New World, and [mestizos](#), of mixed Indigenous and European heritage, replaced [Spanish-born](#) appointees in most political offices. Criollos remained at the top of a social structure that retained some of its traditional features culturally, if not legally. Slavery finally ended in all of the new nations. For almost a century thereafter, [conservatives](#)

[and liberals](#) fought to reverse or to deepen the social and political changes unleashed by those rebellions. The Spanish American independences had as a direct consequence the [forced displacement](#) of the royalist Spanish population that suffered a forced emigration during the war and later, due to the laws of Expulsion of the Spaniards from the new states in the Americas with the purpose of consolidating their independence.

Events in Spanish America transpired in the wake of the successful [Haitian Revolution](#) and transition to [independence in Brazil](#). Brazil's independence in particular shared a common starting point with that of Spanish America, since both conflicts were triggered by Napoleon's invasion of the Iberian Peninsula, which forced the Portuguese royal family to [flee to Brazil](#) in 1807. The process of Latin American independence took place in the general political and intellectual climate of [popular sovereignty](#) that emerged from the [Age of Enlightenment](#) that influenced all of the [Atlantic Revolutions](#), including the earlier revolutions [in the United States](#) and [France](#). A more direct cause of the Spanish American wars of independence were the unique developments occurring within the [Kingdom of Spain](#) triggered by the [Cortes of Cadiz](#), concluding with the emergence of the new Spanish American republics in the post-Napoleonic world.





The Battle of San Lorenzo in 1813



Exodus from the town of Caracas 1814



The Battle of Rancagua in 1814



Vicente Guerrero and Agustín de Iturbide in the "Abrazo of Acatempan", when they agreed to combine forces to fight the royalist army. Oil painting by Román Sagredo, collection of the Museo Nacional de Historia, INAH, México).



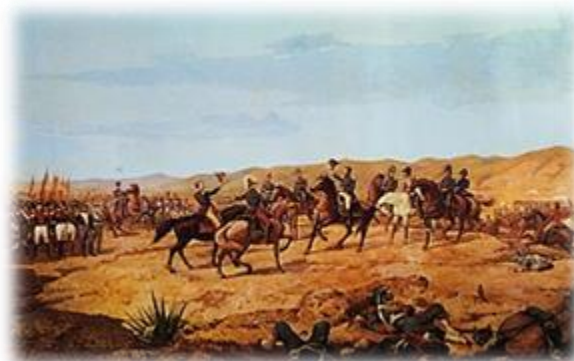
The First Chilean Navy Squadron engaged in the liberation of Peru and sailed as far as to Baja California raiding Spanish ships.



Battle of Carabobo, painting by Martín Tovar y Tovar



Battle of Lake Maracaibo in 1823 resulted in the final expulsion of the Spanish from Gran Colombia



The Battle of Ayacucho, in Peru, ensured the independence of South America in 1824

Military career

Simón Bolívar

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_career_of_Sim%C3%B3n_Bol%C3%ADvar

The **military and political career of Simón Bolívar** (July 24, 1783 – December 17, 1830), which included both formal service in the armies of various revolutionary regimes and actions organized by himself or in collaboration with other exiled patriot leaders during the years from 1811 to 1830, was an important element in the success of the [independence wars in South America](#). Given the unstable political climate during these years, Bolívar and other patriot leaders, such as [Santiago Mariño](#), [Manuel Piar](#), [José Francisco Bermúdez](#) and [Francisco de Paula Santander](#) often had to go into exile in the [Caribbean](#) or nearby areas of Spanish America that at the moment were controlled by those favoring independence, and from there, carry on the struggle. These wars resulted in the creation of several South American states out of the former [Spanish colonies](#), the currently existing [Venezuela](#), [Colombia](#), [Ecuador](#), [Peru](#) and [Bolivia](#), and the now defunct [Gran Colombia](#).

In his 30-year career, Bolívar faced two main challenges. First was gaining acceptance as undisputed leader of the republican cause. Despite claiming such a role since 1813, he began to achieve this only in 1817, and consolidated his hold on power after his dramatic and unexpected victory in New Granada in 1819. His second challenge was implementing a vision of unifying the region into one large state, which he believed (and most would agree, correctly) would be the only guarantee of maintaining American independence from the Spanish in northern South America. His early experiences under the [First Venezuelan Republic](#) and in [New Granada](#) convinced him that divisions among republicans, augmented by federal forms of government, only allowed [Spanish American royalists](#) to eventually gain the upper hand. Once again, it was his victory in 1819 that gave him the leverage to bring about the creation of a unified state, Gran Colombia, with which to oppose the [Spanish Monarchy](#) on the continent.

Historical background

The idea of independence for Spanish America had existed for several years among a minority of the residents of northern South America. In 1797 the Venezuelans [Manuel Gual](#) and [José María España](#), inspired by exiled Spaniard Juan Bautista Picornell, unsuccessfully attempted to establish a [republic](#) in [Venezuela](#) with greater social equality for Venezuelans of all racial and social backgrounds. Nine years later, in 1806 long-time Venezuelan [expatriate Francisco de Miranda](#) led a small group of mostly British and American foreign volunteers in an attempt to take over Venezuela and set

up an independent republic. Like Gual and España's conspiracy, Miranda's [putsch](#) failed to attract Venezuelans of any social and economic class, in fact local Venezuelans organized the resistance to Miranda's invasion and quickly dispersed it. The lack of interest on the part of the Venezuelan [Criollos](#) is often explained by their fear that the loss of the removal of Spanish control might bring about a revolution that would destroy their own power in Venezuela. Nevertheless, in the decades leading up to 1806, Criollos had often been at odds with the [Spanish Crown](#): they wanted an expansion of the [free trade](#) that was benefiting their plantation economy and objected to the Crown's new policy of granting social privileges that had been traditionally been reserved for whites (*españoles*) to [Pardos](#) through the purchase of certificates of whiteness (*gracias al sacar*). So the Criollos' failure to support Gual, España and Miranda, which would have created a state under their control, needs to also be understood by the fact that a national identity separate from the Spanish had not yet emerged among them.

In neighboring [New Granada](#) tensions also existed with the Crown but had not evolved into an outright desire for separation. In 1779 the [Revolt of the Comuneros](#) pitted middle-class and rural residents against the royal authorities over the issue of new taxes instituted as part of the [Bourbon Reforms](#). Although the revolt was stopped and the leaders punished or executed, the uprising did manage to slow down the economic reforms that the Crown had planned for New Granada. In the subsequent decades, a few New Granadans, like [Antonio Nariño](#), became intrigued by the ideas of the [French Revolution](#) and attempted to promote its values by disseminating translated documents like the [Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen](#). Again, this was a minority and not necessarily a sign that the majority in New Granada did not see themselves as members of the Spanish Monarchy.

The break with the Crown came in 1808 with the disappearance of a stable government in Spain. The crisis was precipitated by [Napoleon's](#) removal of Bourbon Dynasty from the throne of Spain (he convinced [Ferdinand VII](#) to abdicate, and his father [Charles IV](#) to renounce any claim to returning to the throne he had abdicated only months earlier) and his [invasion of Spain](#). As the entire [Spanish world](#) rejected the new Bonaparte Dynasty (Napoleon gave the crown of Spain to his brother, the [King of Naples and Sicily](#)), Spain itself fell into chaos and it took almost a year for a coordinated, centralized [provisional government](#) (the [Supreme Central and Governmental Junta of Spain and the Indies](#)) to form. Even then, the rapid and large French advances in the Peninsula seemed to make the idea of a stable government in Spain pointless. By 1810, the Supreme Junta was cornered in the island city of Cadiz during the two-year [Siege of Cádiz](#). Throughout Spanish America, people felt it was time to take the government into their own hands, if a Spanish world, independent of the French, were to continue to exist at all, and therefore in 1810 juntas were set up throughout the Americas, including in Caracas and [Bogotá](#), just as they had been in Spain two years earlier.^[1]

Service under the First Republic (1810-1812)

In 1809 a twenty-six-year-old Bolívar had retreated to his estate in the [Valleys of Aragua](#), refusing to openly participate in calls for the establishment of a Venezuelan junta, because the plans did not consider the option of independence. He was still in his country estates when a junta was successfully established on April 19, 1810. The new Junta of Caracas chose him to be part of a delegation to the United Kingdom to

seek British aid. The delegation did not have much success, but Bolívar did return in December 1810 with [Francisco de Miranda](#), who saw an opportunity in the political turmoil to return to Venezuela.

Independence declared

[Civil war](#) broke out between the provinces of Venezuela that recognized the Caracas Junta and those that still recognized the Regency in Spain (the [Cortes of Cádiz](#)), that had replaced the Supreme Central Junta. The situation became more tense when a congress, called by the Caracas Junta, [declared independence](#) on July 5, 1811, sparking rebellions in [Valencia](#) in favor of the Cortes of Cádiz. Bolívar's first military service was as an officer under Miranda's command in the units created to put down this revolt. Bolívar was promoted to [colonel](#) and made [commandant](#) of [Puerto Cabello](#) the following year. At the same time that Frigate Captain [Domingo de Monteverde](#) was making fast and vast advances into republican territory from the west (his forces had entered Valencia on May 3, 1812), Bolívar lost control of [San Felipe Castle](#) along with its ammunition stores on June 30, when the royalist prisoners held there managed to take it over and attack the small number of troops in the city. Deciding that the situation was lost, Bolívar effectively abandoned his post and retreated to his estate farm in [San Mateo](#). Miranda also saw the republican cause as lost and authorized a capitulation with Monteverde on July 25.^[2]

The royalist restoration

The terms of the [Capitulation](#) of San Mateo, which Monteverde approved but which Miranda never came to sign, granted amnesty and the right to emigrate from Venezuela to all republicans, if they chose to do so. Nevertheless, there was great confusion among the republicans as to what the treaty actually contained or if Monteverde would keep his word. It was in this uncertain environment that Miranda chose to abandon the country before Monteverde occupied Caracas. In the early morning of August 1, Miranda was sleeping in the house of the commandant of [La Guaira](#), Colonel Manuel María Casas, when he was awakened by Casas, Bolívar, Miguel Peña and four other soldiers, who promptly arrested Miranda for [treason](#) to the Republic and turned him over to Monteverde. For his apparent services to the royalist cause, Monteverde granted Bolívar a passport, and Bolívar left for [Curaçao](#) on August 27.

Exile and the Second Republic (1812-1814)

In Curaçao Bolívar learned that Monteverde had broken the promises given in the Capitulation of San Mateo. Many of the republicans who had stayed behind were arrested and the property of many republicans, both in Venezuela and in exile, were [confiscated](#) to make up for the large deficits the government faced. Bolívar decided to rejoin the patriot cause and made his way to [Cartagena de Indias](#), which had established itself as an independent republic on November 11, 1811 (in reaction as much to events in Spain as to attempts by the junta in Bogotá to control it) and joined a few days later in a confederation with four other provinces, the [United Provinces of New Granada](#). In the weeks before arriving in Cartagena in October 1812, Bolívar began to analyze the collapse of the Venezuelan republic and published his thoughts in December in his [Cartagena Manifesto](#). In the document Bolívar blamed the failure on the federal nature of the Venezuelan republic, which had allowed provinces to ignore the needs of other provinces threatened by Monteverde's advance,

and the intransigence of the Venezuelan population to the republican cause, among other things. He saw the Venezuelan case as a warning to the divided New Granada and urged it to retake Caracas from the royalists. He enlisted as an officer in the army of the New Granadan Union and led forces in the [Magdalena Campaign](#) against cities in the lower [Magdalena River](#) that had refused to accept Cartagena's authority or that of the Union, and then attacked [Ocaña](#). His success in these operations convinced the congress of the Union to authorize his plans to invade Venezuela in May 1813, and thus began his [Admirable Campaign](#).

His re-entry into Venezuela marked a new, more violent phase of the wars of independence. Monteverde's troops had already carried out [atrocities](#): he had allowed his soldiers to loot many of the cities he occupied and several of his commanders became notorious for torturing and killing civilians suspected of collaborating with the Republic. Bolívar also faced the fact that by 1813 much of the older aristocrats, who had led the republic, had abandoned the cause of independence, and the general population had turned against republicanism even before its collapse. In order to drive a wedge between Venezuelans and [Peninsulares](#), Bolívar's instituted a policy of [no quarter](#) in his [Decree of War to the Death](#), in which he promised to kill any Peninsular who did not actively support his efforts to restore independence and to spare any [American](#) even if they actively collaborated with Monteverde or the royalists.^[3]

The Republic restored and lost

Bolívar's push towards Caracas was aided by the fact that the general population, which had welcomed Monteverde a year earlier, had become disillusioned by his failure to implement the terms of the San Mateo Capitulation or the [Spanish Constitution of 1812](#), which the capitulation promised. Monteverde also faced attacks on two fronts, since [Santiago Mariño](#) had already opened a front on the east in January 1813. Bolívar's forces easily defeated the overtaxed and underpaid royalist army in a series of battles, entered [Caracas](#) on August 6, 1813, and laid siege to Monteverde, who had retreated to Puerto Cabello. In Caracas Bolívar announced the restoration of the Venezuelan Republic, but placed himself at the head of a [military government](#), since the situation did not allow for the restoration of the old authorities or new elections. Bolívar would base his subsequent and enduring claim to be the sole head of the Venezuelan republic and [commander-in-chief](#) of its forces on this accomplishment, although even at this time he was not universally acknowledged as head of the state or the republican forces. Mariño, based in [Cumaná](#), did not recognize Bolívar's claim, but did collaborate with him militarily. Reprisals were carried out against [Peninsular](#) royalists that were captured. It was during this period that the republican city fathers of Caracas, following the example of [Mérida](#), granted Bolívar the title of [Liberator](#) and office of [captain general](#) in the [Church of San Francisco](#) (the more appropriate site, the [Cathedral of Caracas](#), was still damaged from the [1812 earthquake](#)).

Bolívar and Mariño's success, like Monteverde's a year earlier, was short-lived. The new Republic failed to convince the common people that it was not a tool of the urban elite. Lower-class people, especially the southern, rural [llaneros](#) (cowboys), flocked to the royalist cause. *Llaneros* played a key military role in the region's struggle. Turning the tide against independence, these highly mobile, ferocious fighters made up a formidable military force that pushed Bolívar out of his home country once more. By 1814, the regular royalist army headed by Governor and Captain General [Juan](#)

[Manuel Cajigal](#) was overshadowed by a large, irregular force of *llaneros* recruited and led by [José Tomás Boves](#). With the royalist irregulars displaying the same passion and violence that Bolívar had demonstrated in his "war to the death" decree, the republicans suffered their first major setback at the [Battle of La Puerta](#) on June 15, 1814, and Boves took Caracas on July 16. The republicans and Criollo royalists in Caracas, who also feared Boves's *llanero* hoards, had to [flee en masse](#) to Mariño's strongholds in the east. The combined forces of Mariño's and Bolívar were defeated again at the [Battle of Arauca de Barcelona](#) on August 18, at a cost of 2,000 royalist casualties of the 10,000 troops they fielded, most of the 3,000 combatants in the republican army, in addition to many civilian casualties. Due to their series of repeated reverses both Bolívar and Mariño were arrested and removed from power by [José Félix Ribas](#) and [Manuel Piar](#), each representing the two republican [commands](#) then in place in Venezuela. A few days later Ribas and Piar decided not to try them and instead released them into exile. On September 8, Bolívar and Mariño set sail for Cartagena de Indias, leaving Piar and Ribas to lead the increasingly encircled republicans.

Royalist control consolidated

Earlier in March 1814, [Ferdinand VII](#) had returned to the throne. The [Sixth Coalition](#)'s advances made it impossible for Napoleon to continue holding Ferdinand or fighting in Spain. Once in Spain, however, Ferdinand was not pleased by the revolution in government that had been undertaken in his name, and by May he had abolished the [Spanish Constitution of 1812](#) and began persecuting and arresting the liberals responsible for its creation. To deal with the Americas, Ferdinand organized the largest expeditionary force that Spain ever sent to the Americas up to that time. Colonel [Pablo Morillo](#), a veteran of the Spanish struggle against the French was chosen as its commander. The expeditionary force was made up of approximately 10,000 men and nearly sixty ships. Originally, they were to head for [Montevideo](#) in the [Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata](#), another region that had fallen out of royalist control, but soon it was decided to send these forces to the Venezuela and New Granada, where the war had become exceedingly savage. Realizing that this change in plans would not go over well with the soldiers, the news was kept from them until they were at sea. When the expeditionary force arrived in Venezuela, it found that most of it had been restored to royalist control, save for [Margarita Island](#), which surrendered to it with no blood shed. With Venezuela pacified, plans were quickly made to subdue neighboring New Granada, and the bulk of the troops moved to the coastal city of [Santa Marta](#), which had remained in royalist hands since 1810.

Second exile in New Granada and the Caribbean (1814-1816)

Like many other Venezuelan republicans who fled to New Granada after the second wave of royalist victories, Bolívar once again entered into the service of the [United Provinces](#) and fought against cities that had refused to acknowledge its authority. His forces took Bogotá on December 12, 1814, after an eight-month-long war, and was promoted to captain general for his efforts. He was then given the task of capturing the royalist stronghold, Santa Marta, but Cartagena, the obvious base from which to launch this offensive, refused to give him the necessary soldiers and supplies, so in fighting broke out. As Santa Marta forces gained ground against the divided republicans in northern New Granada, Bolívar left for [Jamaica](#) on May 8, 1815.

Cartagena would fall to Morillo in December 1815 and Bogotá in May of the following year.

Aid from the Haitian Republic and Curaçao

Now thirty-two years of age, he found himself in exile for the second time. In Jamaica, Bolívar once again issued a manifesto explaining his view of the failure of the republican cause in Venezuela. His famous [Letter from Jamaica](#), though ostensibly written to one man, was an appeal to Great Britain specifically and the European powers in general to aid the cause of Spanish American independence, but it found no significant response. So he turned to the small and isolated republic of [Haiti](#), that had freed itself from French rule, but being composed of mostly former slaves, received little aid from either the United States or Europe. Bolívar and other Venezuelan and New Granadan exiles were warmly received by the Haitian president [Alexandre Pétion](#). The growing exile community would receive money, volunteers and weapons from the Haitian president enabling them to resume plans to continue the struggle for independence. There was debate, however, over who should be in charge, but his ability to win over Pétion and a Curaçaoan sea merchant, [Luis Brión](#) (he is traditionally referred to by the Spanish form of his name), who had just acquired a much-needed warship in England to aid the embattled Cartagenan Republic, forced the other Venezuelan leaders to grudgingly accept his leadership. Pétion, for his part, convinced Bolívar to expand the fight for independence to include the liberation of slaves.

The émigrés successfully captured a [beachhead](#) at Los Cayos on March 31, 1816. Bolívar proclaimed the restoration of the Venezuelan Republic and in two [decrees](#) of June 2 and July 16 declared the freedom of slaves conditional on their joining the republican forces. Shortly thereafter, Margarita Island, safely separated by water from Morillo's forces, rejoined the republican cause and became a second base of operations. Operating under the command of [Mariño](#), [Piar](#) and [Carlos Soublette](#) the republican expeditionaries captured more coastal towns. On July 14 Bolívar led an assault against [Ocumare de la Costa](#), which ended in a debacle in which Bolívar abandoned Mariño, Piar and the rest of his forces, and fled by sea. Piar's forces managed to fight their way from the Caribbean coast to the southern [Llanos](#), where the vast and underpopulated terrain and the forces forming under [José Antonio Páez](#) protected them from the royalist army. Mariño retreated to his home province of Cumaná, where he could rely on personal connections to maintain a base of operations. After failing to find support along the coast, Bolívar returned to Haiti. In the intervening months the divided republican leaders unable to agree on a single leader, decided to compromise and in October offered Bolívar the military command, with the understanding that a separate civilian government would be formed. In Haiti Bolívar gathered new supplies and organized a second expedition, named by history as the Jacmel Expedition for the city from which it departed, and on December 31, 1816, landed in [Barcelona](#) controlled by Mariño, who by this point barely accepted Bolívar as head of the republicans.

The Third Republic (1817-1820)

Bolívar took the forces he brought from Haiti to the Orinoco region, which was mostly controlled by Piar. Piar was making headway against the royalists of [Angostura](#), and was preparing to lay siege to the city. The siege proved difficult and long, since Angostura had a lifeline in the river itself. Bolívar's reinforcements were useful and the

city fell in August 1817. Angostura proved to be an immensely valuable base. From it the republicans had access to foreign trade in Caribbean and beyond via the Orinoco. The river's tributaries also provided access to the Venezuelan and New Granadan Llanos to the west, especially those in [Casanare](#), where refugees from Morillo's troops had organized themselves under [Francisco de Paula Santander](#). In Angostura Bolívar began publishing the *Correo del Orinoco* newspaper, an official organ of the revolutionaries, which was circulated not only in Venezuela, but in the Caribbean and in Europe. Under Páez and Piar, the republican armies had begun to recruit the local *llaneros* who, after Morillo disbanded Boves's informal units, no longer had an outlet for quick enrichment and social advancement under the royalist banner. This, however, posed the challenge to the Criollo republican leaders of channeling the *llanero's* energy, while not re-igniting the race war that had occurred under Boves. In this environment leaders like Piar, who in recent years had begun to emphasize his [Pardo](#) roots as he built a Pardo and *llanero* following, became suspect, and this weakness proved useful to Bolívar, when the moment came to reassert his position as head of the nascent republic.

Challenges to Bolívar's authority

The first overt challenge to his rule came with the meeting of the "Congresillo of [Cariaco](#)" on May 8 and 9 under the auspices of [Canon](#) José Cortés de Madariaga—who had been a member of the Junta of Caracas and had just returned to Venezuela after being imprisoned in Spain—Luis Brión and Santiago Mariño. The eight-member Congress proposed to restore the 1811 Constitution and establish a permanent government that could negotiate a recognition by other nations. Mariño offered his and Bolívar's resignation in order to allow the Congress to elect a new executive. The Congress restored the [triumvirate](#) and selected Fernando Rodríguez del Toro (who was at the moment exiled in [Trinidad](#)), Francisco Javier Mayz (one of the eight deputies of the Congress) and Simón Bolívar as the new triumvirate. To replace in an interim manner the two who were not present, the Congress chose Francisco Antonio Zea and Canon Cortés de Madariaga. It made Mariño general-in-chief of the republican forces and established [La Asunción](#) as the temporary capital of the Republic. It sent word to Bolívar to present himself as soon as military conditions permitted to take his place in the triumvirate. Less than a month later, Rafael Urdaneta and [Antonio José de Sucre](#), who remained loyal to Bolívar, lead a group of officers that forced the triumvirate to dissolve itself. By June, Bolívar, aware of its rise and fall, compared its existence to "[cassava bread](#) in hot soup" and noted that at the moment in Venezuela only those who could command by force could truly do so.

It was clear to Bolívar by mid-1817 that he need to set a clear example that he would not tolerate challenges to his leadership. After the fall of Angostura Piar had become upset at Bolívar's leadership and decided to leave the area. He requested a passport from Bolívar, which he granted. Piar had begun to leave the area, when Bolívar changed his mind and accused Piar of plotting to kill all whites in the area and setting up a black and Mulatto republic (a *pardocracia*) in imitation of Haiti. Piar was tracked down, [court-martialed](#) and found guilty. On October 16 he was executed. Although Piar's crime had ostensibly been fomenting racial hatred, it was understood that his true crime had been not recognizing Bolívar authority. After Piar's execution, Mariño, whom Bolívar's confidant and chronicler [Daniel Florencio O'Leary](#) later admitted had been more guilty of insubordination than Piar, fell in line and dropped any other pretensions to an independent leadership.^[6]

His political position secured, Bolívar began to expand the scope of his military activity. He met with Páez for the first time in January 1818, who accepted Bolívar as head of the republicans. Páez, however, refused to take his powerful *llanero* cavalry outside of the Llanos, where they were extremely effective in holding off and defeating Morillo's formal army. Bolívar was, therefore, left alone in a mid-year attempt to take Caracas, which failed. Nevertheless, by the end of the year, the republicans were secure enough in southern Venezuela, that Bolívar felt it was time to convene a new Venezuelan congress to give the republican government a permanent form. Elections were held in republican areas and to pick representatives of the provinces of Venezuela and New Granada under royalist control, among the troops of those areas. The [Congress of Angostura](#), consisting of twenty-six delegates, began holding sessions in February 1819. The highlight of the opening session was Bolívar's "[Address at the Congress of Angostura](#)", now seen along with his "Cartagena Manifesto" and "Jamaica Letter" as a foundational exposition of his political thought. The same day the Congress elected Bolívar president of the Republic and ratified his command of its armies.

The New Granada Campaign

After the opening of the Congress, Bolívar conceived of a daring, yet risky, plan of attacking New Granada which had been a Spanish stronghold for the past three years. If he could liberate New Granada he would have a whole new base from which to operate against Morillo. Central New Granada held great promise since, unlike Venezuela, it had only been recently conquered by Morillo and it had a prior six-year experience of independent government. Royalist sentiment was not strong. But it would be hard to take the initiative against the better prepared and supplied royalist army. To surprise it, Bolívar decided to move during the Venezuelan *invierno*, the [rainy season](#), when the Llanos flooded up to a meter and the campaign season ended. Morillo's forces would be evacuated from the Llanos for months and no one would anticipate that Bolívar's troops would be on the move. This decision, however, would mean literally wading in waist-deep, [malarial](#) water for days before attempting to scale the Andes. Understandably the plan received little support from the Congress or even from the master of the Llanos himself, Páez. With only the forces he and Santander had recruited in the [Apure](#) and [Meta River](#) regions, Bolívar set off in June 1819.

The small army consisted of about 2,500 men: 1,300 infantry and 800 cavalry, including a [British legion](#). It took a route that went from the hot and humid, flood-swept plains of Colombia to the icy mountain pass of the [Páramo de Pisba](#), at an altitude of 3,960 meters (13,000 feet), through the [Cordillera Oriental](#). After the hardships of wading through a virtual sea, the mostly *llanero* army scaled the mountains poorly clothed and ill-prepared for the cold and altitude of the mountains. On both legs of the trip many became ill or died. Despite some intelligence that Bolívar was on the move, the Spanish considered the route impassable, and therefore, they were taken by surprise when Bolívar's small army emerged from the mountains on July 5. In a series of battles under the auspices of [Francisco Mariño y Soler](#) the republican army cleared its way to [Bogotá](#). First at the [Battle of Vargas Swamp](#) on July 25, Bolívar intercepted a royalist force attempting to reach the poorly defended capital. Then at the [Battle of Boyacá](#) on August 7, the bulk of the royalist army surrendered to Bolívar. On receiving the news, the viceroy, [Juan José de Sámano](#), and the rest of royalist government fled the capital so fast that they left behind the treasury, an incredible coup for Bolívar and Santander. On August 10 Bolívar's army entered Bogotá.

With New Granada secure under Santander's control, Bolívar could return to Venezuela in a position of unprecedented military, political and financial strength. In his absence the Congress had flirted with deposing him, assuming that he would meet his death in New Granada. The vice-president Francisco Antonio Zea was deposed and replaced by Juan Bautista Arismendi. All this was quickly reversed when word got to the Congress of Bolívar's success. By year's end Bolívar presented himself before the Congress and asked it to decree the union of Venezuela and New Granada in a new state, [Colombia](#). It did so on December 17 and elected him president of the new country. The Constitution that the Congress had just written for Venezuela became null and void and a new congress was set to convene within two years.

President and Commander-in-Chief of Gran Colombia (1820-1825)



1820 proved to be a banner year for Bolívar. His dream of creating a new nation was becoming a reality. Morillo no longer had the upper hand militarily and by late March reports began to arrive about the success of the [Riego Revolt](#). The revolt meant that the reinforcements that Morillo's expeditionary force desperately needed would not be coming. Moreover, in June the official orders to reinstate the [Cádiz Constitution](#) arrived and were implemented. The new Constitutional government in Spain radically changed policy towards the rebellions in America. It assumed that the revolutionaries, as liberals, were either fighting for, or could be co-opted by, the Spanish Constitution. Although this might have been true

in parts of Spanish America at the start of the decade, by 1820 most Spanish Americans did not trust Fernando VII to keep his oath to the Constitution for long. More importantly, it had always been Bolívar's stance that the wars were between two sovereign states, and therefore, the question of reconciling with the Spanish Monarchy under the 1812 Constitution was never a consideration.

Despite this, Morillo continued with negotiations and focused on getting a [ceasefire](#) and bringing the war in line with the [law of nations](#). This was achieved in two treaties signed on November 25 and 26 in [Santa Ana de Trujillo](#), which established a six-month cessation of hostilities and regularized the [rules of engagement](#). The negotiations were also important because the Spanish government for the first time tacitly granted Colombia national status, rather than seeing its representatives as mere rebels. Spain did not of course recognize Colombia, but the negotiations papers referred to it as such, rather than with the previous denominations of "Bolívar's forces" or "the Congress at Angostura." The ceasefire allowed Bolívar to build up his army for the final showdown everyone knew was coming. By the end of the year, the Constitutional government granted Morillo his long-standing request to resign and he left South America. He was replaced by [Miguel de la Torre](#).

Victory in Venezuela

The truce did not last all six months. On January 28 the [cabildo](#) of [Maracaibo](#), which had been in secret negotiations with the republicans aided by native son [Rafael Urdaneta](#), declared the province an independent republic, which chose to join Colombia. La Torre took this to be a violation of the truce, and although the republicans

argued that Maracaibo had switched sides of its own volition, both sides began to prepare for renewed war. The fate of Venezuela was sealed, when Bolívar returned to Venezuela in April 1821, leading an army of 7,000 from New Granada. At the [Battle of Carabobo](#) on June 24, the Colombian forces decisively defeated the royalist forces, assuring control of Venezuela, save for [Puerto Cabello](#) and guaranteeing Venezuelan independence. Hostilities continued until the surrender of Puerto Cabello in 1823, but the main front of the war now moved to southern New Granada and Quito.

The Southern Campaign, Quito and Peru (1821-1824)

With the Spanish Monarchy collapsing in South America and the uncertainty of constitutional rule in Spain, provinces of the [Presidency of Quito](#) began to declare independence. In October 1820 a coup in [Guayaquil](#) set up a junta, which declared Guayaquil a republic. [Portoviejo](#) and [Cuenca](#) followed suit in the next few weeks. [Quito](#) remained in royalist control under the Audiencia President, Field Marshal [Melchior Aymerich](#), and by January 1821 had defeated the forces sent by Guayaquil against it. Bolívar was determined to ensure that the Presidency of Quito become part of Gran Colombia and not remain a collection of small, divided republics. To this end, Colombian aid in the form of supplies and an army under [Antonio José de Sucre](#) began to arrive in Guayaquil in February. Throughout 1821 Sucre was unable to take Quito, and by November both sides were exhausted and signed a 90-day armistice. The following year, at [Battle of Pichincha](#) on May 24, 1822, Sucre's Venezuelan forces finally conquered Quito. The territory of New Granada was secure. From [Puerto Cabello](#) royalist make a counterattack at [Battle of Lake Maracaibo](#). However the main focus now became neutralizing the royalist Army in Peru.

[José de San Martín](#) had already made incursions into Peru starting in 1820. He had been declared Protector of Peruvian Freedom, in August 1821 after liberating parts of the country, but the important cities and provinces still remained royalist. Bolívar and San Martín held a [meeting in Guayaquil](#) on July 26 and 27, 1822, in which they discussed plans to liberate Peru and it was decided that Bolívar and Gran Colombia would take over the task of fully liberating Peru. San Martín departed from the scene. For the next two years Colombian and Peruvian patriot forces gain more territory. On February 10, 1824, Bolívar was given immense political powers when a Peruvian congress named him dictator of Peru, which made Bolívar the head of state of a second country and allowed Bolívar to completely reorganize the political and military administration of Peru. Bolívar, assisted by Sucre, decisively defeated the remnants of the royalist cavalry on August 6, 1824, at the [Battle of Junín](#). Sucre then destroyed the still numerically superior remnants of the royalist army at [Battle of Ayacucho](#) on December 9. South American independence was now all but secured. The only royalist area in the continent was highland country of [Upper Peru](#), [El Callao](#) and [Chiloé](#).

The Peruvian and Colombian campaign in Upper Peru

Bolívar was now president of both Gran Colombia and Peru and had been granted extraordinary powers by the legislatures of both countries to carry out the war against the Spanish Monarchy. Since Bolívar was tied up with the administration of Quito and Peru, the liberation of Upper Peru fell to Sucre and [O'Connor](#), and within a year in April 1825, the task had been completed. A congress of Upper Peru on August 6, 1825, chose to name the new nation after the Liberator and called it the Republic of Bolívar. (The name would later be changed to Bolivia.) With independence secured for all of

Spanish South America, Bolívar's political life entered a new phase. He now had to turn to consolidating the large nations he had created out of the former Spanish provinces. And dissension began to brew in the north as the regions of Gran Colombia began to chafe under the centralized government.

The dissolution of Gran Colombia and aftermath

During 1826, internal divisions had sparked dissent throughout the nation and regional uprisings erupted in Venezuela, and Gran Colombia appeared to be on the verge of collapse. An amnesty was declared and an arrangement was reached with the Venezuelan rebels, but political dissent appeared in New Granada as a consequence of this. In an attempt to keep the nation together, Bolívar called for a constitutional convention at [Ocaña](#) to be held in April 1828. To prevent the splintering of Gran Colombia, Bolívar proposed to introduce an even more centralist model of government, including some or all of the elements he had been able to place in the Bolivian constitution: a [lifetime presidency](#) with the ability to select a successor, and a hereditary third chamber of the legislature. These proposals were deemed anti-liberal and met with strong opposition, including from a faction forming around Santander, who by now was openly opposed to Bolívar politically.

The [Convention of Ocaña](#) (April 9 to June 10, 1828) met under a cloud. Many felt that the breakup of the country was imminent. Addressing these fears, the Congress went in the opposite direction that Bolívar had hoped, and drafted a document which would have implemented a radically federalist form of government with greatly reduced the powers for the central administration. Unhappy with this outcome, pro-Bolívar delegates left the convention and the constitution was never ratified.

After the failure of the convention, Bolívar proclaimed himself dictator on August 27, 1828, through an [Organic Decree](#) of Dictatorship. He considered this as a temporary measure, as a means to reestablish his authority and save the republic, though it only increased dissatisfaction and anger among his political opponents. On September 25, 1828 an attempt to assassinate Bolívar failed, but it illustrated the tense political atmosphere in Gran Colombia. Although Bolívar emerged physically intact from the event, he was, nevertheless, greatly affected. Dissent continued, and new uprisings occurred in New Granada, Venezuela and Quito during the next two years. Gran Colombia finally collapsed in 1830. Bolívar himself died in the same year at age 47 on December 17. His closest political ally at the time, Sucre, who was intending to retire from public life, had been murdered earlier on June 4, 1830.

Bolívar's legacy continued in the [successor states](#) to Gran Colombia. Many of the officers who had fought by him were not only involved in the revolts that led to the dissolution of Gran Colombia, but continued to play important political and military roles in the decades and wars that followed. Bolívar's political thought—his emphasis on a strong, centralized government—became the basis of conservative thought in nineteenth-century South America.

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